

I would like to make a comment on keeping media in many (and local) hands, in part by discussing my concerns over Sinclair Broadcasting Group's latest behavior.

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air "Stolen Honor", a smear on John Kerry, and make some specific recommendations to the FCC. Forcing local stations to air this piece illustrates very well why it is dangerous to have a few large corporations controlling our nation's airwaves - we need more local control of media.

So much of the American public's opinion on national and world events is shaped by what they see on television that the control of this medium is something that should be granted very carefully. When a company like Sinclair abuses this privilege to forward its own political agenda, its license should NOT be renewed and it should be held accountable, publicly, for its abuse of power.

Sinclair's behavior highlights well the case against allowing more consolidation of media outlets. Allowing just a few large corporations to control information flow on what is surely the most important shaper of public opinion in America is very dangerous. Ownership largely determines programming content, as we have seen numerous times from Sinclair's refusal to allow fallen troops to be honored by having their names read by the anchor, to the blocking of liberal-leaning election advertisements while allowing right-leaning ones to air. Being that ownership determines programming content, it is vital that we have a wide range of owners so that a wide range of voices can be heard, and also to support public television and radio stations which allow voices to be heard which are independent of the commercial outlets. Large media corporations not only tend to have similar interests, but these interests are often quite opposed to those of most of the public - allowing these interests to define public discussion and thought is not the job of the FCC - the job of the FCC is to protect the American public and the American democracy by keeping diverse voices on the airwaves and preventing corporations from abusing their power. Diverse ownership of media outlets is essential, and this ownership should be local in nature whenever possible.

I know this has become rather a long comment. I just want to urge the FCC to promote local control of media and work against the consolidation of our nation's information flow into fewer and fewer hands. Also, the Sinclair case shows clearly why media owners must be held up to tough scrutiny - if they are found to not be serving the American public and instead promoting their own political agendas, their broadcasting privileges should be swiftly and permanently revoked.

Thank you very much for your time.